

VA



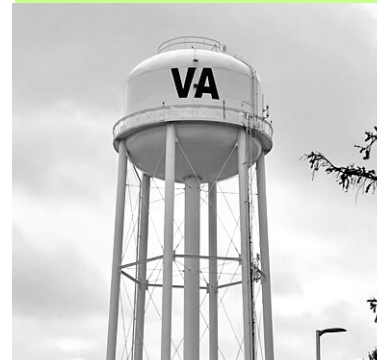
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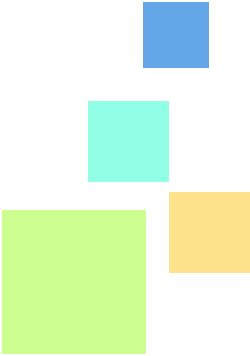
Veterans Health Administration  
VA Illiana Health Care System

# VA Illiana Annual Report

*Honoring the legacy of our past.  
Serving the Veterans of today.*

20  
22





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# MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR



At VA Illiana, our health care teams know that providing high-quality care to America's Veterans is an ongoing journey, not a destination.

As technology, clinical approaches, and best practices evolve, we will remain on the cutting edge of care. Our strategic goals reflect distinct areas of growth that support our vision of becoming the health care system of choice for Veterans, serving and honoring them by providing an outstanding patient experience.

Our first goal, becoming a high reliability organization, reflects the VA-wide commitment to the safety of the Veterans who trust us with their care. By working toward high reliability, we empower our talented staff to raise their voices when something seems off. In all we do this year, we're also focusing on improving the Veteran experience. For so many Veterans, a visit to one of our locations of care is much more than a doctor's appointment. Instead, it is a direct reflection of how we—as a nation—value their sacrifice. We owe them no less than our best. Finally, we are improving the employee experience by communicating clearly, listening to every voice, and responding to the needs of the people who make public service their life's work.

*Staci Williams*  
Staci Williams, PharmD, RPH  
Executive Director

## VA Illiana **Strategic Priorities**

- 1** **Becoming a high reliability organization**
- 2** **Improving the Veteran experience**
- 3** **Improving the employee experience**

# WHO WE ARE & WHAT WE DO

At VA Illiana, we're proud to serve those who served our nation.

We provide Veterans with health care services at 6 locations serving a 34-county area of central Illinois and west-central Indiana. Locations of care include the Danville VA Medical Center and 5 outpatient clinics in Bloomington, Decatur, Mattoon, Peoria, and Springfield, Illinois. VA Illiana is one of the leading health care systems serving Veterans in the VA Great Lakes Network.

## EXECUTIVE LEADERSHIP TEAM



**Staci Williams, PharmD, RPh**  
Executive Director



**Vas Naidu MD, D-ABFM**  
Chief of Staff



**Maridith Hearnley**  
Acting Associate Director



**Kelley Sermak, MSHSA, BSN, RN, CENP**  
Associate Director, Patient Care Services



# BY THE NUMBERS

At VA Illiana, Veterans receive care tailored to their individual needs and wishes. These numbers help tell the story of how we care for our diverse Veteran community.



**Unique Veterans**

**29,876**



**Women Veterans**

**2,288**



**LGBTQ+ Veterans**

**171**



**Bed Days of Care**

**32,854**



**Telehealth Visits**

**6,573**

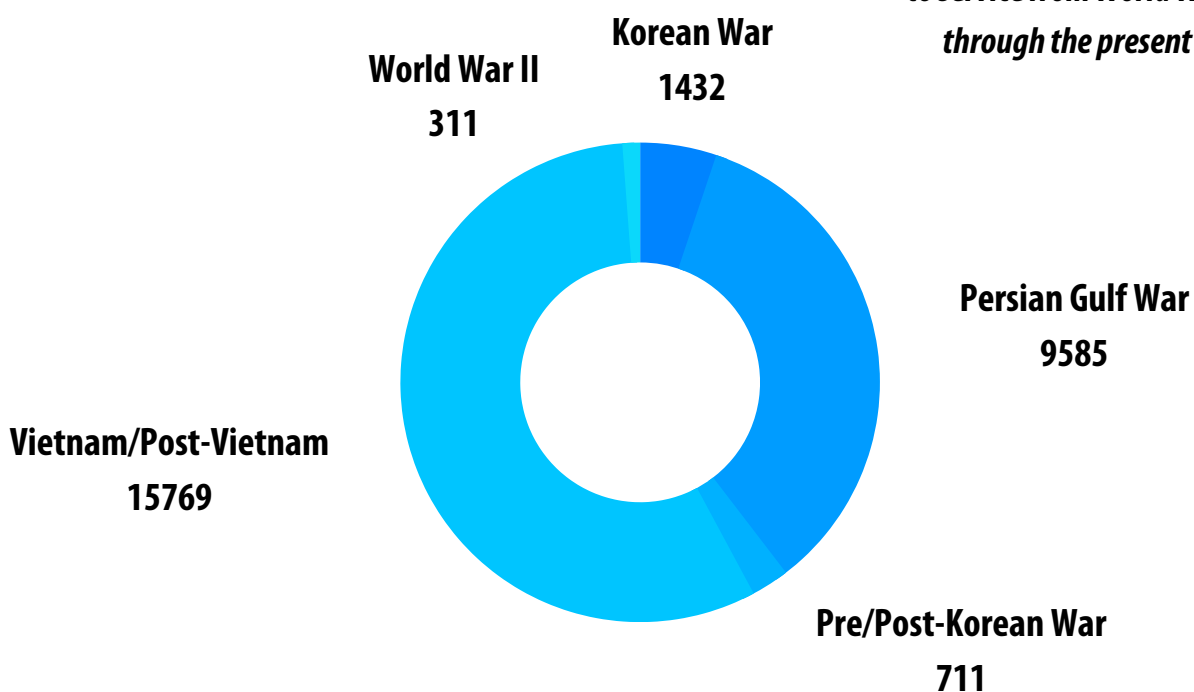


**In-Person Visits**

**337,981**

# BY THE NUMBERS

## Veterans by Era of Service



In FY22, VA Illiana treated 50 patients otherwise ineligible for VA Health Care under humanitarian emergency authorization.

VA Illiana's average daily census across FY22 was 90.01. This represents the average number of inpatient Veterans receiving care on a given day.



# BY THE NUMBERS



## *Lifting All Voices*



By establishing and utilizing Special Emphasis Programs (SEP) and engaging with affinity groups, VA raises employee awareness of the importance of diversity and inclusion and demonstrates VA's commitment to a model Equal Employment Opportunity workplace.

VA Illiana is home to the following Special Emphasis Programs:

- American Indian and Alaska Native
- Asian American, Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander
- Black/African American
- Federal Women's Program
- Hispanic
- Individuals with Disabilities
- LGBTQ+
- Student Outreach and Recruitment
- VA for Vets

## *Celebrating the Diversity of America*

Events and observances that focus on diversity, equity, and inclusion are opportunities for staff to come together to celebrate the strength found in diversity. In FY22, VA Illiana held 15 such events and observances supporting our goal of attaining a diverse, qualified workforce.



**15** Diversity & Inclusion  
Events in  
FY22



# NEW LIFE ON THE LINKS

## ***Blind Veteran Finds Healing, Success on the Golf Course***

Paul White couldn't believe what he was hearing.

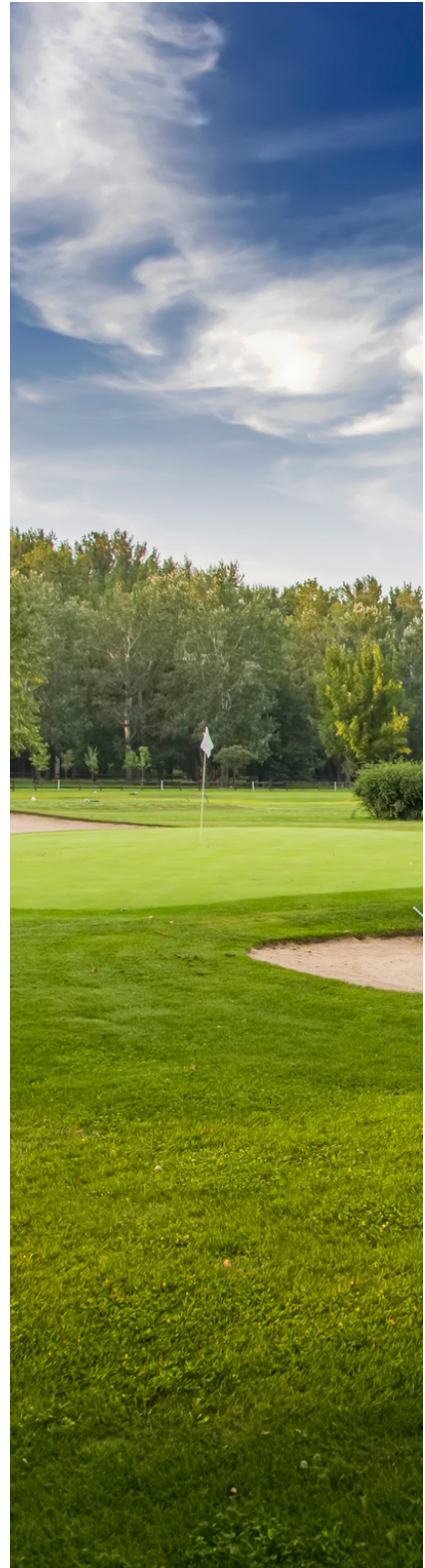
*Taking us on a golf outing? Are you kidding me? This has got to be some sort of joke.*

*“When I was on the golf course, it was just me and that ball. It was peaceful. It was therapeutic. It was my life.”*

White had always considered golf a sport he'd never play due to its notorious difficulty. After all, he'd never swung a golf club in his life and felt more at home on a baseball diamond than a driving range. Stepping onto the links for the first time in 2019, White scarcely knew an albatross from a double bogey. He had also recently become legally blind.

White, a Veteran of the United States Marine Corps, had his first experience with golf while participating in VA's Blind Rehabilitation Program at Edward Hines Jr. VA Hospital in Chicago. Now, after nearly four years of sharpening his game, he is headed to the National Disabled Veterans Golf Clinic in Iowa City, Iowa. White's success on the golf course has been a journey of personal growth and empowerment that speaks to the way VA's recreation therapy and blind rehabilitation programs change lives.

“Sitting at home, I found myself thinking about how it felt to be on the course playing golf without a worry in the world,” he said. “When I was on the golf course, it was just me and that ball. It was peaceful. It was therapeutic. It was my life.”



More than helping him adjust to life without vision, White credits golf for other positive changes in his life that have made him healthier and more confident.

"Once I began practicing, I was concentrated on being a golfer," said White. "Since I've been playing golf, I believe it's put twenty years on my life. I have purpose and I can walk down the street with my chest out feeling proud of myself."

According to VA Illiana Recreation Therapy Supervisor Travis Winkler, who works with White, results like this are what VA's recreation therapy program is all about.



**Paul White poses for a photo on the grounds of the Danville VA Medical Center. White is a Veteran of the United States Marine Corps.**

"The mind cannot be anxious when it is fully engaged in an activity that a person enjoys," said Winkler. "Outcomes like the one Paul has experienced take hard work. Recreation therapy is an opportunity for Veterans to address and mitigate issues they have had. By discovering activities they enjoy, Veterans have a chance to put down the burdens they have carried."

Winkler said White's participation in the annual golf clinic is a testament to the dedication White has shown the game. The event, which traces its origins to 1994, strives "to provide adaptive golf instruction for Veterans who participate to make the game more accessible." The Clinic's goal "is to inspire Veterans to challenge their limitations and improve their quality of life by actively engaging in rehabilitation and therapy."

White aims to keep honing his game and stay focused on developing the skills he has learned through recreation therapy and blind rehabilitation.

"Golf gave me a new life," said White. "VA gave me the skills I needed to live that new life to its fullest. Thanks to these programs and especially Mr. Jeff Stroud, my Visual Impairment Services Team coordinator, I feel like a new man. No matter what the future holds, I know I have the support I need to keep thriving on and off the golf course."



# Locations of Care

VA Illiana provides services at 6 locations serving a 34-county area of central Illinois and west-central Indiana.



## Danville VA Medical Center

**1900 East Main Street  
Danville, IL 61832-5100**

**Phone: 217-554-3000**



## Bloomington VA Clinic

**207 Hamilton Road  
Bloomington, IL 61704-7527**

**Phone: 309-827-4090**



## Bob Michel VA Clinic

**7717 North Orange Prairie Road  
Peoria, IL 61615-9323**

**Phone: 309-589-6800**

**"Our debt to the heroic men and valiant women in the service of our country can never be repaid. They have earned our undying gratitude."**

**-Harry S. Truman**

# Locations of Care

VA Illiana is one of the leading health care systems serving Veterans in the VA Great Lakes Network. We're an innovative care center within the Veterans Integrated Service Network 12 (VISN 12). VISN 12 includes medical centers and clinics in Wisconsin, Illinois, northwestern Indiana, and the Upper Peninsula of Michigan.



## Decatur VA Clinic

**792 North Sunnyside Road  
Decatur, IL 62522-1156**

**Phone: 217-362-5442**



## Mattoon VA Clinic

**501 Lakeland Boulevard, Suite D  
Mattoon, IL 61938-5283**

**Phone: 217-258-3370**



## Springfield VA Clinic

**5850 South 6th Street, Suite A  
Springfield, IL 62703-5162**

**Phone: 217-529-5046**

*"This nation will remain the land of the free only so long as it is the home of the brave."*

-Elmer Davis

# ***ANY POSITIVE CHANGE:*** **VA ILLIANA SAVING LIVES WITH SYRINGE SERVICE PROGRAM**

As the United States faces unprecedented numbers of overdose deaths involving illicit opioids and stimulants, VA Illiana is on the front lines helping keep Veterans safe.

VA is helping Veterans access tools to reduce their risks associated with drug use through syringe service programs (SSPs), an initiative first implemented within VA by staff at VA Illiana.

SSPs are harm reduction programs. This means they prioritize keeping people safe and alive ahead of eliminating drug use. Connecting Veterans with the tools they need to reduce their risk of death or serious illness is an effective harm reduction strategy.

Syringe service programs have existed in communities in the U.S. for over thirty years and they provide much more than sterile syringes. SSPs provide overdose education, naloxone, testing for HCV and HIV, screening for sexually transmitted infections, and linkage to treatment.

A misconception is that harm reduction programs enable drug use, but the facts tell a different story. Participants who use SSPs are five times more likely to receive treatment for substance use disorders and three times more likely to stop injecting drugs. Harm reduction embraces the concept of “any positive change” and celebrates small steps moving towards healthier living.

VA is committed to keeping all Veterans safe and alive by using a harm reduction approach. Shame and stigma around drug use and addiction can make people feel alone and keep them from seeking help. Talking about drugs and engaging people who use them allows VA to provide Veterans more compassionate, inclusive care. Since VA Illiana launched their SSP, more than ten other VA Health Care Systems have launched similar programs and many more are in progress.



*Some components of a harm reduction kit distributed by VA Illiana.*



*Serving.  
Caring.  
Healing.*  
***VA Illiana***

**VA**



U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

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# ***THE VIEW FROM THE (BLOOD) DRIVERS SEAT***

VA Illiana Employees Save Lives, Support VA's Fourth Mission

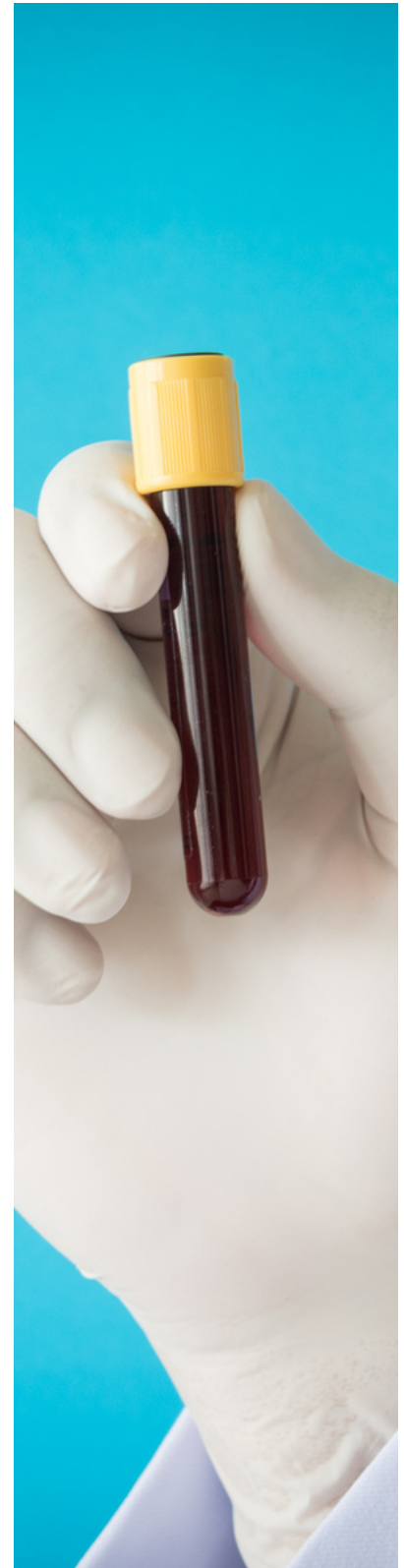
On most days, Veterans use VA Illiana's spacious Social Activities Room (SAR) as a multipurpose space to come together. From church services to musical performances, the room is a place for Veterans to enjoy life-affirming social interactions in an environment of care.

Every eight weeks, VA Illiana's Social Activity Room (SAR) undergoes a change. Tables are moved and chairs are pushed aside. Rows of reclining seats and boxes of medical equipment are carefully arranged. Through the combined efforts of VA Illiana staff and ImpactLife blood center, this room becomes a mobile blood donation center.

According to VA Illiana Executive Director Staci Williams, donations by VA employees at blood drives throughout the year help save lives while contributing to VA's Fourth Mission to support America's disaster preparedness.

"It is incredibly important for VA Illiana staff to come together to fight the national blood shortage," said Williams. "When we give blood, we help Veterans and others in the community. As a health care professional and executive director, it is important for me to do my part to donate alongside our staff who have done so much."

In early 2022, the American Red Cross declared a "national blood crisis" for the first time in history. In response, VA staff have risen to the occasion. According to Karon Russell, a registered nurse and blood drive coordinator for VA Illiana, employee participation is critical to eradicate the shortage.





"You never know when you will be in a position to be in need of blood donation," said Russell. "Covid-19 has caused a decrease in the number of available donors while increasing the need for donated blood, meaning we are never far from being at a critical level. Thankfully, we've seen many first-time donors in the last few months, many of whom became repeat donors."

Since January 2022, VA Illiana has donated 85 units of whole blood and has seen 16 double red cell donations. Russell said these metrics are on track to surpass 2021 totals.

Russell also noted blood donation has the power to impact multiple lives. With one blood donation able to save up to three lives, the recurring nature of blood drives at VA Illiana means employees are able to sustain their efforts to fight the blood shortage.

"This is a chance for VA Illiana to give back to the community," said Russell. "VA is a huge part of the Danville community and our clinics play a critical role in each of the communities they serve. Blood donation is a way for employees to give back in way that makes a true difference."

Blood donation at VA goes deeper than fighting the 2022 shortage. Echoing the Executive Director's message, Russell said VA's Fourth Mission of supporting national readiness is rooted in a tradition of service.

"This is VA's chance to show our country that since we are the largest integrated health care system in the world, we bring in an incredibly diverse pool of donors," said Russell. "Veterans served our country courageously in every time and place. Through blood drives, VA employees can carry that spirit of service and generosity forward."







**VA**



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**[VA.GOV/ILLIANA-HEALTH-CARE/](https://va.gov/illiana-health-care/)**